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DEPARTMENT OF NURSING EDUCATION

IN CHARGE OF

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The collaborators in this department will be glad to receive short items of interest relating to the field of training-school work. States east of the Mississippi should send their contributions to S. Lillian Clayton, Philadelphia General Hospital, Philadelphia, and those west of that section to Anna C. Jammé, Board of Health, Sacramento, California.

PROGRAMS FOR NURSES' MEETINGS

(Continued from November Journal)

When we consider the number of nursing organizations holding yearly, monthly and even weekly meetings in every state and city and county in this country, we begin to realize the immense opportunity for educational work which such meetings present. To attract busy professional women to organization meetings, it is necessary to provide something which is not only interesting and attractive, but which appeals to them as practical and profitable. This is the business of the program committee, and it requires the most thoughtful, original and enterprising people the society affords to organize this work and put it through effectively.

A few general principles may be suggested for the program committee's work. In the first place it is absolutely necessary that there should be a carefully thought-out plan for the season's series of meetings, or in the case of a convention, for the sessions as a whole, otherwise the topics are likely to be all jumbled together, leaving only a confused and fleeting impression instead of giving a clear-cut picture of some definite phase of nursing work with a choice of well-defined policies to be carried out.

Where the program committee is changed each year, it is very difficult to avoid a repetition of some of the same old topics year after year, while a great many very important and vital questions are overlooked. This difficulty might be lessened by submitting copies of the former season's programs to the incoming committee and making a definite effort to introduce new topics or at least to handle the old ones from a new point of view. If the members of the organization can be induced to contribute suggestions for topics which they would like to have discussed, it simplifies the work of the committee greatly, but such sug-

gestions are usually rather hard to get. A letter to each member asking for definite problems which concern her most closely might bring a better response. An enterprising committee will of course canvass the field for topics of immediate current interest. A topic like Prison Reform, even though not directly concerned with every-day nursing affairs, starts people thinking along new lines and often stirs up profitable discussion.

The form which the meetings take also requires some thought. Lectures and papers become wearisome if continued as a steady method, so that the committee will usually find it wise to provide for some variation in the form of practical demonstrations, exhibits, debates, question-boxes, stump speeches, and social entertainments of various kinds. Often sister or neighbor organizations can be invited to meet together and a rather special effort made to promote general good-feeling and coöperation through some of the many devices for "mixing-up" which are popular in church and college gatherings. A rather new departure was introduced recently by the New York City League of Nursing Education, when a special meeting was arranged to which pupil nurses from the various schools in the city were invited. It gave the pupils an opportunity to meet and hear representative women in the profession and to get a glimpse of some of the bigger problems in which their interest and coöperation are needed.

The tendency to depend entirely on clergymen and doctors and other weighty and influential people as speakers at nurses' meetings, is fortunately passing. We have discovered that nurses are entirely capable, not only of conducting their meetings with dignity and dispatch, but of preparing speeches and writing papers which are at least as interesting and valuable as those usually presented by outsiders. Furthermore, it is highly desirable that our own members should have all the training we can give them along these lines. Alumnae associations should train their members for city and state work, and state organizations should contribute trained speakers for the national organizations. Inbreeding is fatal to the life of any organization, we must be constantly bringing in new blood or we degenerate. Every effort should be made to draw out the more backward members and give every one a chance to take some part, however small, in the proceedings. Short papers of three to five minutes on different phases of a general question are helpful as a start for beginners, and the old-fashioned debate with four or five on each side, provides very profitable entertainment as well as good practice in speaking. Many other devices will suggest themselves. The main thing is to keep this idea of training our members, firmly in mind as one of the primary purposes of a nurses' organization.

But inspiration as well as education is needed if we are to have a thriving organization. We need to get the point of view of outsiders,—the doctor, the clergyman, the teacher, the lawyer, the social worker, the architect, and all the other people whose work touches ours, even remotely. We need to meet and feel the influence of powerful personalities, both men and women. They broaden our views, they bring fresh ideas, they often contribute wholesome criticism and shake us out of our self-complacency.

It is not usually difficult to secure excellent speakers for nurses' meetings, if the matter is approached in the right way and if plenty of time is left for arrangements. It is always worth while to try for the best, at least, and then if necessary take second best. Experience has shown that it is unwise to invite a speaker whose standing on certain fundamental principles of nursing work is unknown or whose views are extreme or likely to cause ill-feeling. Usually it is necessary to provide prospective speakers with rather detailed directions as to topic, time, place, etc., and to accompany this with some literature or information on the work of the organization which they are to address. If copies of the paper are needed for publication, a duplicate type-written copy should be asked for. If it seems advisable to arrange for advanced publicity, in the case of convention meetings, a third copy will be necessary or a summary of the main points in the address, which is more satisfactory on the whole. This should be sent to the secretary or publicity committee some time in advance of the meeting.

It is of course desirable that there should be enough good material provided to fill the time profitably, but the principal danger seems to be that of over-crowding the program. The effort to get everything in, puts a strain on chairman, speakers and audience, and no one gets full benefit from the proceedings. Speakers should be told in advance just how much time they will be expected to take, and though exceptions should be made in favor of especially important people who have a big subject to discuss, it is well on the whole to limit most speakers to a half an hour, or at most, three-quarters of an hour. Papers should be shorter than speeches, as they are harder to follow. It is almost impossible to hold the interest and attention of any audience longer than two hours at a stretch, and for tired women a good snappy meeting of an hour and a half is infinitely more effective than long ambling programs which trespass on meal times and keep people up late at night.

A great deal of attention should be paid to the form and arrangement of the program. For printed programs, it is wise to keep on hand a collection of old programs of various kinds which can be used for

suggestions as to color, shape, size, type, etc. Multigraphed or mimeographed cards or sheets can usually be gotten out at small expense, and if they are sent out to members a week or two before each meeting, they usually receive more attention than the year's program of topics distributed in the beginning of the season. In arranging about the printing of programs, it is usually a mistake to include advertising, even if it reduces the cost considerably. Dignity and simplicity are important considerations; clearness, accuracy and convenience of reference, are essential. Some originality and a knowledge of publicity methods are needed in phrasing the topics as so to arrest attention and to suggest interesting possibilities, without resorting to cheap or sensational devices. Putting the topic in the form of a direct question or a specific problem to be solved, is a favorite method. Sometimes a number of short, concise statements are thrown down to indicate the line of the speaker's argument and serve as pivots for discussion. If these are distributed before the meeting, people come better prepared to support or oppose the positions taken and a much livelier meeting is usually secured.

Some of the papers and reports given at the annual national meetings might very well serve as a basis for discussion in the local organizations during the succeeding year. Plans and recommendations could be threshed out and criticised, new points of view brought out and additional data collected. The resulting reports sent back to the next convention from all parts of the country would be invaluable in checking up new policies and suggesting lines of fruitful effort. There would be a great advantage, too, in the fact that in all sections of the country nurses would be concentrating on the same definite problems at the same time, instead of dabbling a little in a great many things. This plan has been recommended and followed to some extent by the local and state branches of the League of Nursing Education, the printed report of the spring and summer meeting serving as a suggestion for the following winter's activities in the branches.

In the same way a new book on some professional subject or very suggestive article in a current magazine may be assigned for general reading by the members, and special topics selected for debate and discussion. Anything which makes the members think and which teaches them to express themselves clearly and forcibly, is to be preferred to the endless routine of papers and lectures which we fall back upon so easily.

The list of topics printed in the November JOURNAL could be lengthened indefinitely and each one could be presented from many points of view. It is suggested that a card catalogue of available topics, with

notes as to speakers, etc., should be kept by the secretary of local and state leagues of nursing education and other organizations, for ready reference. This could be supplemented from time to time by suggestions from members and might prove a mine of ready information for new program committees.

ITEMS

An interesting development in training school work, showing in practice the articulation of the high school with the training school, is now taking place in San Diego, California. St. Joseph's Hospital is sending its students to the high school for their instruction in domestic science, chemistry and physiology. The class consisting of thirty-eight students has been divided into two sections of nineteen each. The high school has provided special instructors for these classes, no other students being admitted. The instructor in cooking is a graduate of Drexel Institute, Philadelphia. The students find well-appointed class rooms, class material and all that is necessary to aid in making the instruction a success. The classes are held in the evening from seven to eight; students must report promptly on time and the class terminates also promptly on time. Credits received for this work are entered into the training school record.

It is not unusual in California to find some of the studies taken up in the high school, but no school has, as yet, entered into such an arrangement so extensively. The question may be asked, How can the school afford to provide special instruction, class rooms, material, etc? The answer is, The funds which the high school receives from the state are dependent on the daily attendance, therefore the larger the attendance, the more funds the school has at its disposal. It can thus afford to appoint special instructors and in fact encourages the formation of classes of nurses and seeks to meet the requirements of the school.

The members of the Pittsburgh League of Nursing Education have arranged for a series of lectures on Pedagogy, to be given by Dr. George Ellis Jones, Assistant Professor of Education, University of Pittsburgh.